(a) whether RBI has been receiving large number of complaints against Indian and foreign banks concerning credit cards;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether banks are issuing credit cards *suo moto* and thereafter harass individuals to pay charges etc.; and

(d) the steps taken to curb such fraudulent practices of banks?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) The Offices of Banking Ombudsmen received a total of 2,187 and 3,087 credit cards related complaints against the foreign banks during the year 2006-07 and 2007-08 respectively. The figures for the Indian banks for this period are 5,501 and 7,020 respectively.

(c) and (d) RBI undertook a study on the credit card operations of banks, which also included issue of unsolicited credit cards. The recommendations of the study report include obtaining explicit consent by the credit issuing banks for issue of credit cards or other products offered alongwith the cards. RBI has issued a circular dated 23.07.2008 advising the banks to take appropriate action on the recommendations of the study report. Further, RBI has also issued a Master Circular on Credit Card Operations of banks dated July 1, 2008 wherein banks have been advised that unsolicited credit cards should not be issued and that in case an unsolicited card is issued and activated without the consent of the recipient and the latter is billed for the same, the card issuing bank shall not only reverse the charges forthwith, but also pay a penalty without demur to the recipient amounting to twice the value of the charges reversed. In addition, the person in whose name the card is issued can also approach the Banking Ombudsman who would determine the amount of compensation payable by the bank to the recipient of the unsolicited credit card as per the provisions of the Banking Ombudsman Scheme, 2006, *i.e.*, for loss of complainant's time, expenses incurred, harassment and mental anguish suffered by him. The guidelines provide that any loss arising out of misuse of such unsolicited cards will be the responsibility of the card issuing bank only and the person in whose name the card has been issued cannot be held responsible for the same.

Commissioning of Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline Project

*54. SHRI R.C. SINGH:
SHRI D. RAJA:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the talks on the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline Project have been progressing very slowly;

(b) if so, at what stage the talks are and what are the issues remaining to be solved; and

(c) what steps are being taken for the early commissioning of the project?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MURLI DEORA): (a) to (c) India is pursuing the import of natural gas from Iran through Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) Gas

Pipeline Project. Various important issues, *viz.*, pricing of gas, delivery point of gas and transportation tariff and transit fees for passage of natural gas through Pakistan territory are under discussion amongst the participating countries. Five meetings of India-Pakistan Joint Working Group (JWG) have been held. Three meetings of India-Iran Special JWG have been held. Six meetings of tripartite JWG of Iran, Pakistan and India have been held. Further, a Ministerial-level meeting between India and Pakistan on the IPI Project has also been held in Islamabad on April 25,2008.

Such multilateral projects involve protracted discussions, as all the aspects have to be carefully examined and deliberated upon to the satisfaction of the participating countries to protect each country's interests and to avoid any problems in the future in the successful operation of the project.

India as a preferred business destination

*55. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA:

Will the Minister of CORPORATE AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a FORBES study, containing a comparative business analysis from various angles in 121 countries, has ascribed India's fall in ranking this year from 51st to 64th to "demonstrated resistance to increasing personal freedom, higher inflation from food and other commodity costs, as well as increased burdens on entrepreneurs, etc."; and

(b) if so, what steps Government proposes to take so that India becomes a preferred "Business Destination" in the fast emerging global market?

THE MINISTER OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS (SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government takes appropriate steps to facilitate and promote the operation of business in the country, through requisite policy and administrative initiatives for creating and maintaining an environment conducive to investment and growth.

Increasing Supply of Dollars

*56. SHRIMATI T. RATNA BAI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the RBI has announced a package of measures aimed at increasing the supply of dollars and augmenting liquidity;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the exchange rate is primarily determined by demand and supply and the outflow of portfolio capital aggravated the rupee's fall; and

(d) if so, the response of Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) The RBI has announced a package of measures aimed at improving domestic and foreign currency liquidity in September and October, 2008 as under: